

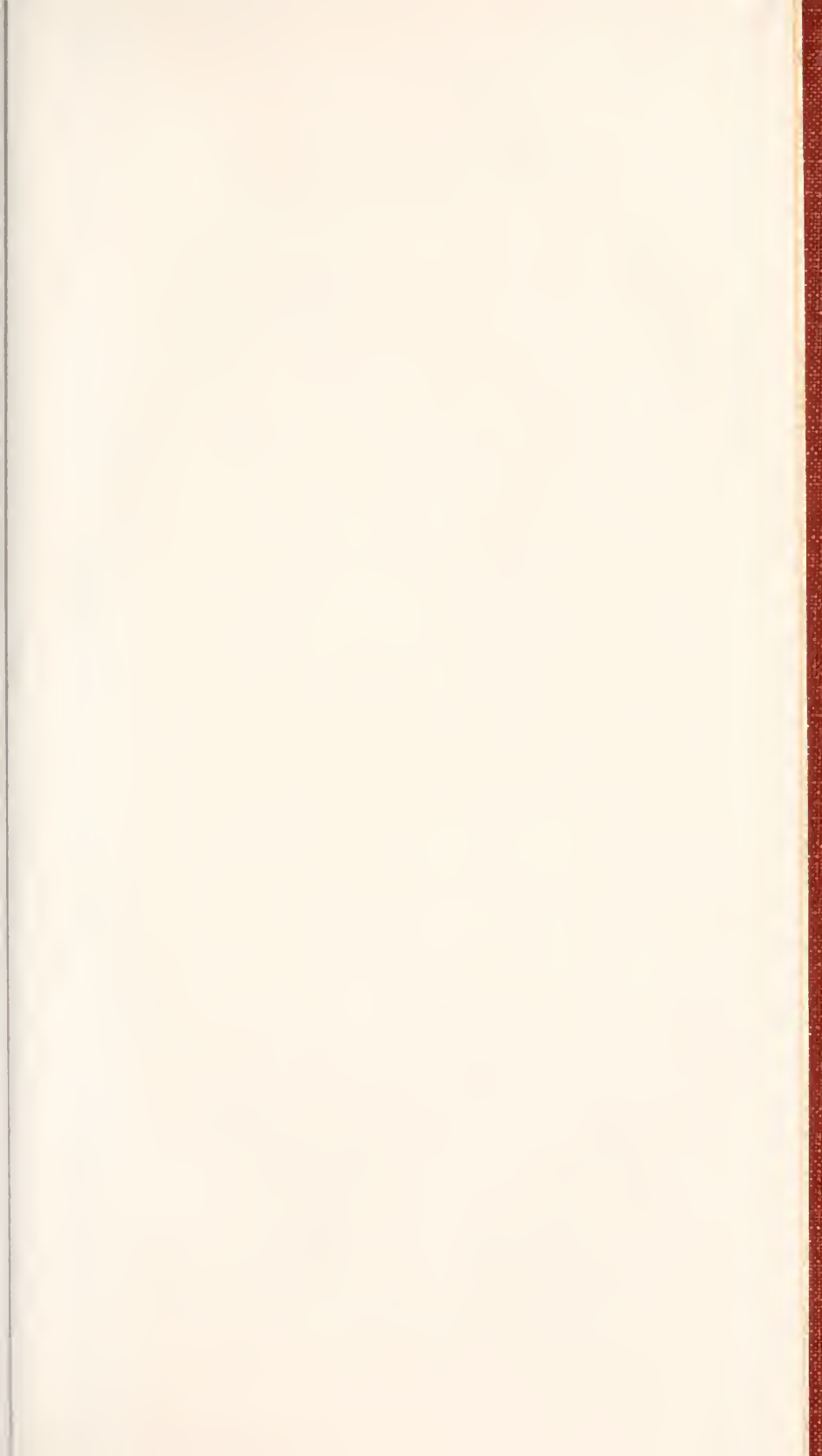
E 449  
.M1354













em. Gilman, Charleston  
House, Bep,

Tract No. 10.

From the Colonization Journal, February, 1862.

SELF-EMANCIPATION.

A SUCCESSFUL EXPERIMENT ON A LARGE ESTATE IN  
LOUISIANA.

BY

MR. JOHN McDONOGH.

COMPLETED IN 1840.

WHILE the subject of compensating owners of slaves for such as shall be emancipated by the Act of State Legislatures, which involves property represented by several hundred millions, to be assumed as a national burthen, is under discussion, the following narrative of an experiment made by Mr. John McDonogh, and furnished by him for the *New Orleans Bulletin*, about the middle of July, 1842, sheds light upon the question of special value.

We have here the fact that a whole family of slaves were so stimulated to industry by the hope of earning their freedom, that the owner not only received from their wages full value, but from their extra diligence as slaves, enough more, to have replaced them by the purchase of others.

On this plan any State might, by enacting a law securing to every slave the right to purchase his liberty at a fair valuation, as is done in Cuba, under Spanish law, to this day, develop the same industry and self-reliant labor, so that really the burthen of emancipation would not be felt. The slave population might become their own redeemers by peaceful industry in one generation.

If, during the progress of the experiment, there was no relaxation of race prejudice, and both classes of population should deem separation mutually beneficial, or the dominant race should insist upon it, one or two years additional only would be needed to earn abundant means for the purpose.

We commend the letter to all thoughtful minds.

MESSRS. EDITORS:—In a piece wrote by me in June last, on the subject of sending away some of my black people to Africa, and published in your paper of the 24th of that month, I ob-

served that "the act of sending those people away is, in my case, one of simple honesty alone."

HE CLAIMS NO GENEROSITY—SIMPLY HONESTY.

I lay no claim, nor am I entitled to any credit or praise on the score of generosity. My meaning in the above assertion, I will explain, Messrs. Editors, through your paper, should my leisure admit of it, at some future time, and the rather, as it may perhaps be of service to the slaveholders of the State, to know how one who has had much to do, for forty years past, with the treatment of slaves, has succeeded in it. When they find, from my experience, that they can send their whole gangs to Africa, every fifteen years, without the cost of a dollar to themselves, what master will refuse to do so much good, when it will cost him nothing in the doing of it, and afford him at the same time such high gratification, in knowing that he has contributed to the making many human beings happy? For my experience will show that, with a proper treatment of slaves, the gain from their extra labor—that is, labor over and above that which slaves in general yield their owners—in the course of time—say, fifteen years—will enable their masters to send them out, and purchase, in Virginia or Maryland, with the gain made from said extra labor, a gang of equal number to replace them. In addition to which, what an amount of satisfaction, I would ask every humane master, would he not enjoy, in knowing that he was surrounded by friends, on whose faithfulness and fidelity he and his family could rely, under every possible contingency!" In fulfillment, then, of said promise, I now undertake to explain the observation I then made, that "the act of sending these people away is, in my case, one of simple honesty alone;" and to set forth and show the mode I adopted and pursued, after much experience and reflection on the subject for many years, in their treatment, and its results.

Before commencing, however, this long detail of treatment and its attending circumstances, I will promise to those who feel an interest in the subject, and will take the trouble to read this recital, that it is one of egotism throughout; it tells of what the master said and what he did, from the beginning of the chapter to its end. In this, therefore, I will be excused; it is what I promised, and there is but one way of telling the story to make it intelligible.



IN 1822 HE GAVE HIS SLAVES SATURDAY AFTERNOON, AND WHY !

To proceed, then, and give you the plan which I laid down for myself, and have pursued for the last seventeen years, for the conduct and management of those I held in bondage, I have to observe that having been at all times opposed to laboring on the Sabbath day except in cases of actual necessity, one of my rules for their walk and guidance in life always was, that they should never work on that holy day, prohibited as we were from so doing by the divine law. A long experience, however, convinced me of the utter impossibility of carrying it out in practice by men held in bondage, and obliged to labor for their master six full days in the week ; and I saw, on reflection, much to extenuate, as to them, the offence against my rule. They were men, and stood in need of many little necessities of life not supplied by their master, and which they could obtain in no other way but by labor on that day. I therefore had often to shut my eyes and not see the offence, though I knew my instructions on that head were not obeyed ; and in consequence, after long and fruitless exertions, continued for many years, to obtain obedience to that injunction, I determined to allow them the one-half of Saturday—say, Saturday from mid-day until night—to labor for themselves, under a penalty well understood by them, of punishment for disobedience, if they violated thereafter the Sabbath day, and sale to some other master.

#### HAPPY EFFECT OF SABBATH TEACHING.

From this time, which was about the year 1822, the Sabbath day was kept holy ; church was regularly attended, forenoon and afternoon (for I had a church built expressly for them on my own plantation, in which a pious neighbor occasionally preached on the Sabbath day, assisted by two or three of my own male slaves, who understood, preached, and expounded the Scriptures passably well, and at times I read them a sermon myself); and I perceived, in a very short time, a remarkable change in their manners, conduct, and life, in every respect for the better.

THE SLAVES EARNED MUCH MONEY BY WORK SATURDAY AFTERNOON. IF LAID UP, MIGHT PURCHASE THEIR FREEDOM.

We proceeded on in this way, happy, prosperous, and blessed in every respect by the Most High, for about three years, or until 1825, when, seeing the amount of money which they gained

by their Saturday afternoons' labor (they in general labored for myself, though they were permitted to labor for whom they pleased, giving the preference to their master, even at a less rate of wages, on whose honesty they could depend for payment, for they were paid as regularly as the night came), in the long days of summer, I paid the men for their Saturday afternoons' labor at the rate of sixty-two and a half cents per day, the women at the rate of fifty cents per day; in the short days of winter, I paid the men at the rate of fifty cents per day, the women thirty-seven and a half cents per day, and the large boys and girls in proportion.

#### A PLAN FOR SELF-EMANCIPATION PROJECTED IN 1825.

I was led to calculate in what length of time, by labor, economy, and perseverance in well-doing, they would be enabled to purchase the remaining five and a half days of the week (seeing that they had a capital of their own, in the one-half of one day in each week to begin the trade on), and by that means obtain freedom for themselves and children. In this estimate and calculation, I soon satisfied myself that it could be effected in the space of fourteen to fifteen years, at the furthest. The next consideration with me was, "Is it my interest to assist them in its accomplishment? or can I, by any means I can devise, make it to become my interest to assist them in obtaining their freedom in that time?" This also required reflection and calculation. I went at it, and in a very short time, from the clearest of all deductions, was convinced, satisfied that it could be done, and that it was, in every point of view in which the subject could be looked at and considered, my interest, and more especially if I took into view the considerations of satisfaction, pleasantness, and happiness, which I should enjoy in tending to the happiness of others, to do it.

#### THE PLAN PROPOSED TO HIS BEST SLAVES.

When thus satisfied that the project was good in itself, and worthy of trial for various solid reasons, I determined to lay my plan before them, and explain it in all its bearings—that is, before some ten or twelve men and women—those men and women in whom the others had confidence, and looked up to, at all times and in all situations, for their superior talents, capacity, and virtues, for counsel and advice (for it is the same with the black as the white man; assemble together, for the first time, twenty or fifty

white men—a company of soldiers, for instance—and within forty-eight hours after being brought together, though strangers to each other, the great majority will place their eyes on certain men among them, for their wisdom, courage, and virtue, on whom they, unknowingly to one another, determine to look up to, as leaders or chiefs, to conduct, counsel, and advise them). This I did when church service was over, on a Sabbath afternoon, observing to them, that having their welfare and happiness in this world, as well as the next, much at heart, I was, in consequence, greatly desirous of serving them and their children; that in furtherance of these views and desires, I had a plan to propose to them, which, “if you have confidence in the truth and honesty of your master, of his friendship for you, and sincere desire to serve you and do you good (for except you have that confidence in him, and mutual regard, friendship, and esteem for him, there would be no use in saying a word more about it, or in attempting to carry out the plan I have to propose to you; for I notify you beforehand, it cannot succeed, if the most unlimited confidence and esteem do not mutually exist, as well on the side of the master as of the servant), will, from this day and hour, change the whole course of your lives, though I acknowledge in justice to you all, that I have no particular charge to make against the morality of your past lives and walk in the love and fear of God. If you and your children will be faithful, honest, true, sober, economical, industrious—not eye-servants—laboring day and night, considering the affairs and interest of your master as the affairs, concerns, and interest of each and every one of you individually, and all this with fixed determination to persevere in well-doing to the end, under every temptation that may assail you, and over every obstacle that may fall in your way, and will in every thing be ruled, directed, and guided by me, I will then, in that case, and under this full agreement and understanding between us, undertake so to manage your affairs, by becoming your banker, the keeper of your gains and of your accounts, as to insure your freedom and that of your children, with the blessing of the Most High—viz., your freedom in Liberia, in the land of your fathers, a great and glorious land; for, let it be understood between us, it is your freedom in Liberia that I contract for, for I would never consent to give freedom to a single individual among you, to remain on the same soil with the white man—within the term, according to my estimate and calculation, of fifteen or sixteen years, or there-

abouts, say a year or two sooner, or a year or two later. This will be effected, in conformity to my plan and estimate, in the following manner—viz.: The one-half of Saturday being already your own, in consequence of my agreement with you that no labor should be done on the Sabbath day, your first object will be to gain a sufficient sum of money to purchase the other half of Saturday, which is the one-eleventh part of the time you have to labor for your master, and of consequence, the one-eleventh part of the value your master has put upon you, and which you have to pay him for your freedom. This, I notify you, will be the most difficult part of your undertaking, and take the longest time to accomplish, and is to be effected by laboring for me on Saturday afternoons, and leaving the amount of your labor in my hands, to be husbanded up for you. By foregoing every thing yourselves, and drawing as little money as possible out of my hands, I calculate you will be able to accomplish it in about seven years; that once accomplished, and one whole day out of six your own, you will go on more easily and rapidly; indeed, that once effected, your success is certain.

“Proceeding, then, on in your good work, you will be enabled easily, by your earnings on one entire day in each week, to effect the purchase of another day of your time, in about four years. Now master and owner of two days in each week, you will be able, in two years more, to purchase another day, so that three days, or the one-half of your time, will be your own; in one and a half years more, you will be able to purchase another day, making four days your own; in one year more, another, or the fifth day; and in six months, the last day, or the whole of your time, will be your own. Your gains, in less than another year, will suffice to free (added to what the youths will have gained in the mean time) your children, and all will be accomplished. In the foregoing estimate, I calculate that you will draw from me occasionally some small sums of money, to furnish little necessities you may need; but you will remember, when one draws, the whole of you, each individual, must draw at the same time—the men, an equal sum each; the women, the three-fourth part each of the sum drawn by the men.

#### PRICES CHARGED THE SLAVES.

“You shall be estimated at fair and reasonable prices—say, the men at six hundred dollars each; the women at four hundred and fifty; and the boys, girls, and children in proportion. An ac-



count shall be opened at once on my books, and your valuations charged, without taking into account the increased value of the youth and children as they advance in age, and no child to be charged who shall be born after the commencement of this agreement—this, in some measure, as a counterbalance to an interest account, as none will be calculated or allowed you on the amount of your gains in my hands. Such men and women as have no children of their own, when they have worked out their prices, shall be held and obligated to work and assist in paying for the children of others, so that the whole company shall go on the same day on shipboard, and sail for your fatherland. I expect and shall insist on a strict performance of your moral and religious duties in every respect, and church regularly attended by you and your children, forenoon and afternoon, on the Sabbath day.

#### PENALTY OF MISCONDUCT.

As I would not agree to keep an immoral or bad servant, or one whom I would be obliged to have chastised for offences, on any consideration, should any of you, therefore, commit crimes at any time, whilst serving under this agreement, he, or she, shall be immediately put up at public sale (their offences declared and made known), and sold; and whatever money they had earned under this agreement, shall go to the benefit of the others in general."

[I have now to state, that during the whole of the period in which they were laboring for themselves, under this agreement, I had to sell, for conduct I could not pardon, but two individuals; this should not be considered strange, looking at the situation in which they were placed, in the vicinage of such a city as New-Orleans, and oftentimes within its bosom for months together.]

#### PLAN RECEIVED WITH TEARS OF JOY BY THE SLAVES.

I have now to observe that their surprise and astonishment at such a proposal—coming, as it did, from a master who had unlimited legal power over them and their time—expecting nothing of the kind, may be easily conceived. They gave their consent with tears of joy; declared the confidence they entertained of my truth, honesty, and pure intentions to do them and their children good, and their willingness and determination to be guided in all things by me, and to make my will and my interest, after the Divine will, the study and rule of their lives.

## A WEEK OF CONSULTATION.

On separating, I told them to communicate my plan and proposals to their adult fellow-servants, male and female, and to say to them that none were bound or forced to come into the arrangement who had any objection to it—that such as did not wish to accept of it, should go on under the old regulations; and I requested one and all of them to consult together through the week, and to give me their final answer and determination on the next Sabbath in church, when it should be confirmed or abandoned.

## PLAN NOT TO BE MADE PUBLIC.

At the same time charging them, as they valued my affection, to keep what I had said to them (desirous, as I was, to avoid, by so doing, the making the slaves of other plantations unhappy or discontented) in their own bosoms, and never to disclose it until after they should have left the country for Africa, to a living being on earth. “Be content,” said I to them, “with the good you are about to receive, and keep the knowledge of it to yourselves.” This they promised me they would do, and which, I believe, they religiously did.

## JOYFUL ACCEPTANCE OF THE PLAN BY ALL.

On the next Sabbath day, I met them in church, and was told that they had informed all their fellow-servants of my views and intentions towards them; that they had well reflected through the past week on all that I had said to them; that they were at a loss for words to express their love and gratitude to me for what I had done, and was now desirous of doing for them and their children; that they had always looked on me in the light of a father, deeply interested in their welfare; that I was the only true friend they had on earth; that they accepted one and all of the proposals I had made them, and were determined, with the assistance of the Most High, to a change of life—to live and walk in the divine law; to be guided, in all their worldly conduct, implicitly by my directions and counsel; and to fulfill, with all the energy of their souls, the agreement they had entered into and taken with me. On this, I observed to them that it was all well; that the contract and agreement was concluded; that we would on both sides, master and servants, begin from that day to execute and carry it out; that I

would put down in writing all I had said to them, that no mistake might arise thereafter, of what I had said, or what I had not said. That "to put you, however, more fully in possession of my scheme for your benefit, to give you a more perfect understanding of it—of the contract you are about to take on yourselves—so that, in the carrying of it out, complete success may attend it on both sides, that neither party, master nor slave, may be disappointed, I will inform you what I expect to realize, and how it is to be effected.

EXTRA LABOR, TO GET THE MEANS OF EMIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT IN LIBERIA.

"My object is your freedom and happiness in Liberia, without loss or the cost of a cent to myself, from sending you away, and conferring that boon, as the humble instrument of the Most High, on you and your children. How, you will naturally inquire, is that to be done? I will tell you how it is to be done. There is but one way, one mode to effect it, that I can see or devise, and that is by greater assiduity and exertions in the slave to his labor during the usual hours of day labor, and especially by extra hours of labor before day in the morning, and after night in the evening. One hour after night in the evening, and one hour before day in the morning, would be two hours extra in twenty-four hours, which would be the one-sixth part more of time devoted to labor than is generally demanded of the slave, which is equivalent to two years and a half additional labor in fifteen years. Two hours' extra labor before day in the morning, and two hours after night in the evening, would be four hours extra in every twenty-four hours or day, which would be the one-third part more of time devoted to labor than is generally demanded of the slave, which is equivalent to five entire years of additional and extra labor in fifteen years. Without a scheme of this kind," said I to them, "by means of which you can effect a greater amount of labor in a given time than you otherwise could do, I could not afford to send you out; for without it, my sending you to Liberia would, under the agreement, and in the mode I propose, of permitting you to gain your freedom by laboring during the hours and time which belong to your master, and by that means paying him for your time, though it appears specious in itself, be, in reality, the making you a present of your time—the making you and your children a gift of your freedom. For as the whole of your time belongs to your master (the Sabbath

day excepted, on which holy day neither master nor servant is permitted to labor), if he was to permit you to work on a certain part of it, to make money to purchase your freedom, he would, in reality, in so doing, make you a gift of your freedom, which few masters could afford to do. But in the mode which I propose, and now explain to you, that you may fully comprehend and understand it, which is the contract and agreement you are now making, and taking on yourselves to perform, your master will not make you a present of an hour of your time, and you, in reality, will have gained and placed in his hands, previous to the going out free, a sum of money arising from your extra labor, fully sufficient to enable him to purchase an equal number of people with yourselves, man for man, woman for woman, and youth and child for youth and child, to take your place in the work of his farm, so that his work and revenue shall not be stopped or arrested for an hour, and to set you out with all things necessary in your new life and new undertaking, should he think proper so to do, much to your own advantage, respectability, and happiness, and to his own satisfaction and honor; for a humane master will delight in tending to the happiness of those whom the Most High has placed under his care, and who have served him truly and faithfully. The only difference and change, then, which this arrangement will make in the affairs of your master, will be, that he will have the same number of new servants in the place and stead of his old and faithful ones, to do his work. You therefore now see and fully understand what my scheme for your benefit is. It is feasible, and can be easily accomplished; while it will tend, at the same time, to the happiness of your lives while carrying it out and putting it into execution. I repeat to you again," said I to them, "that my plan is based on extra labor; that you must consider none, day or night, too great for you to perform, remembering, at the same time, that it is not to be accomplished in a day, but will require years of perseverance in well-doing, to effect it. On my part, you may depend on my prudence, not to involve myself by speculation or otherwise, with the Divine blessing, so as to put it out of my power to carry out the agreement; and I will take care, by keeping regular accounts of all your gains, and by instructions to my executors in my last will and testament, should it please Him in whose hands all things are, to take me from life before the full accomplishment of the scheme, to have our agreement truly



and fully executed, and justice rendered you, by selling you out as servants for time, and then, after the expiration of your term of service, seeing that you and your children are sent out to Liberia."

#### THESE HARD TERMS AGREED TO BY THE SLAVES.

To all this, they—the whole of the adults, men and women (no youth or child was present)—lent an attentive ear; and again, with eyes streaming with tears, assured me of their full determination to devote their days and nights to the honor of God, the happiness of their children, and the carrying out the plan I had devised for their benefit.

#### RESULTS OF THE EXPERIMENT.

It now remains for me to state the results of the experiment.

1. In less than *six years*, the *first half day* was gained and paid for by them.

2. In about *four years*, the next, or *second day* of the week, was paid for and their own.

3. In about *two and a quarter years*, the next, or *third day*, was paid for and made their own.

4. In about *fifteen months*, the next, or *fourth day*, was theirs.

5. In about *a year*, the next, or *fifth day*, was gained and paid for.

6. And in about *six months*, the last, or *sixth day* of the week, became their own, and completed the purchase—effecting their freedom in about *fourteen and a half years*. After this, it took them somewhere about *five months* to labor, to pay the *balance due on their children*, added to what the youths, boys and girls, had earned.

If there appears any discrepancy in the period in which they effected the purchase of the different days for themselves, it is to be accounted for in their drawing more money at one period than at another, as they frequently did towards the last, after they had accomplished the purchase of two or three days, or their freedom would have been sooner accomplished.

#### COMPLETED AUGUST, 1840.

This took place—the effecting of their freedom, in August, 1840, nearly two years since, at which time they would have taken their departure for Liberia; but as the Abolitionists of the

Northern and Eastern States of our Union had occasioned much excitement in our State, not only among the owners of slaves, but among the slaves themselves, I did not consider it safe, or myself at liberty, however much I desired it, as there was a considerable black population in the immediate neighborhood of the residence of those my black people, to send them away. I therefore told them, without giving them the cause, that they must be satisfied to remain where they were until the proper time for their departure should arrive, with which they remained satisfied. So that they effected their freedom, as above stated, in about fourteen years and a half; and the assertion I made in your gazette of the 24th of June last, that "the act of sending those people away is, in my case, one of simple honesty alone," is explained in my having received in money from them, or the equivalent of money, the full price agreed on between us for their freedom in Liberia.

#### REASON FOR THE PLAN.

Some persons, Messrs. Editors, may now, perhaps, be disposed to say, Why proceed in this roundabout way, this giving the one-half of Saturday, this keeping of accounts, this purchasing of day after day, etc., etc.? It is all unnecessary, and their working to gain their time an illusion. That the whole of the time of the slave belongs to, and is the time of the master; that the master can compel his labor, without freeing his slave, etc. I admit the truth of the latter part of the assertion, that the time and labor of the slave belong of right to the master, but deny that the first is illusory, as respects either one or the other, the master or his slave; for it is founded in the moral constitution of man.

#### INSPIRATION OF HOPE.

Without hope, a certain something in the future for him to look forward and aspire to, man would be nothing. Deprive him of that inspiring faculty of soul, and he would grovel in the dust as the brute. But, say they, why not promise him at once freedom after fifteen years' service? To this I have many and strong objections. In that mode, his freedom would appear the gift of his master, who might repent and retract, as the slave would fear, of his promise. In the other mode, the slave would have gained it—have purchased and paid his master for it. Hope would be kept alive in his bosom; he would have

a goal in view, continually urging him on to faithfulness, fidelity, truth, industry, economy, and every virtue and good work. The observations of a great and good man, with whom I was in correspondence, made to me in one of his letters some years since, to whom I had faintly intimated the plan I was pursuing with my people, are so descriptive of their situation, feelings, and conduct, that I will give an extract from it :

“ Your plan, dear sir, as I infer from what you have intimated to me, calls into action a higher and nobler motive than servile fear. It holds out a reward to the obedient and the faithful. Such a motive can seldom fail. It is the impulsive cause of all good conduct. Hence we find it holding a conspicuous place in that system of government which the Almighty exercised over the ancient Israelites : ‘ If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.’ And the same motive to Christian conduct is presented under the Christian dispensation : ‘ Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.’ ”

#### BASES OF THE PLAN RELIGION.

From the foregoing summary, it will be seen that the basis of my plan for their success and government was RELIGION—a desire to awaken in their bosoms the love of the Divinity. Hope and trust in him, once born in their souls, would produce its fruit—a determination to obedience, labor, order, economy, and all good works. That such was the result, and such the impulsive cause of their true and faithful conduct, is shown. Its effects on the interest of their master, his happiness, and their own happiness, are also seen and shown. They have now sailed for Liberia, the land of their fathers ; and I can say with truth and heartfelt satisfaction, that a more virtuous people do not exist in any community ; and I pray the Most High to continue unto them the blessings which he never ceased to shower down on their heads whilst under my roof.

#### CHANGE WROUGHT IN THEIR CHARACTER.

I will further observe, that from the day on which I made the agreement with them, notwithstanding they had, at all times previous thereto, been a well-disposed and orderly people, an entire change appeared to come over them. They were no longer, apparently, the same people. A sedateness, a care, an economy, an industry, took possession of them, to which there seemed no bounds but in their physical strength. They were never tired of

laboring, and seemed as though they could never effect enough. They became temperate, moral, religious, setting an example of innocent and unoffending lives to the world around them, which was seen and admired by all.

#### PECUNIARY RESULT.

The result of my experiment, in a pecuniary point of view, as relates to myself, is not one of the least surprising of its features, and is this—that in a space of about sixteen years, which those people served me, since making the agreement with them, they have gained for me, in addition to having performed more and better labor than slaves ordinarily perform in the usual time of laboring, a sum of money, including the sum they appear to have paid me in the purchase of their time, which will enable me to go to Virginia or Carolina, and purchase a gang of people of nearly double the number of those I have sent away. This I state from an account kept by me, showing the amount and nature of their extra work and labor, which I am ready to attest to in the most solemn manner, at any time.

#### THEIR CHEERFUL INDUSTRY.

Previous to entering into the agreement with these people, I calculated (and my estimate and calculation have been fully realized, and more than realized to me, in the result) that their labor would be given with all the energy of heart, soul, and physical powers; that they would, in consequence, accomplish more labor in a given time, than the same number of people would in ordinary circumstances; and that, in addition, they would labor some two, three, or four hours, morning and night, in the twenty-four hours of the day, more than other slaves were in the habit of doing, or would do. To set forth and show the spirit that actuated and filled their souls, in relation to their worldly concerns, during the whole time they were operating under this agreement, I will state in the sequel to this some circumstances known here to hundreds of our most respectable citizens.

#### THIS PLAN AVAILABLE FOR GENERAL EMANCIPATION.

If the planters of Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas, whose lands are worn out, would entrust their slaves to the younger male branches of their families, to bring here, into our



State, to cultivate the richest alluvial soils in the world, they would be enabled, under such an agreement with their slaves as I have pointed out above, every fifteen years—after gaining by their extra labor the value of their entire gangs, making large revenues, and passing happy lives (for I can say with great truth, that the last sixteen years of mine, passed, as they have been, in peace, and without anxiety, in the midst of those people, have been among the most happy of my life; for the very knowledge that I was surrounded by those who looked upon me in the light of a friend and father, and who would willingly, at any time, have periled their own lives to have saved mine, if necessary, gave peace and serenity to the mind)—to send their entire gangs to Liberia, without a cost of a dollar to themselves. Besides which, to bring their slaves into this State, and keep them here fifteen years, would be an act of humanity, as it would inure them to a climate very analogous to that of Africa, and they would run no risk to their health or lives when afterwards settling in Liberia.

#### MUTUAL CONFIDENCE NEEDED.

I will now state that to carry out this plan with complete success, it is all-important that the slave has full and entire confidence in his master; he must know and be convinced that his master is his friend and well-wisher; that he is true, sincere, and honest. Without this confidence of the slave in his master, I at once confess, the plan could not be carried out with success. It would be in vain for a master to attempt it whose character was known for duplicity, untruth, dishonesty, cruelty, etc., etc. He would not succeed in it; for no one is better acquainted with the master than the slave himself.

#### RELIGION TO BE CULTIVATED.

To insure the success of the plan in all its parts, I will say also to such masters as feel an interest in the happiness of their black people, and will attempt to execute and carry it out, Neglect not religious instruction to your people; for religion must be combined with the plan, and walk hand in hand with it.

#### THE PROGRESS MADE REPORTED EVERY SIX MONTHS.

To encourage them in the execution and carrying out of their engagement, I showed them, every six months, or twice a year, their accounts on my books, and informed them of their state,

their success, and the sum of money they had gained, and which was in my hands, standing to their credit of their accounts. This proceeding on my part appeared to instil, as it were, new life into them, to afford them great satisfaction; it was a proof, also, to them, of the interest I took and felt in their affairs.

PROPER LAWS TO PROTECT THE SLAVES IN THIS PLAN  
DESIRABLE.

The Legislatures of our different slave States might, by the enactment of laws on the subject, greatly assist and protect the interest of the slave. I do not mean by forcing the masters to make such arrangements, or to come to such an understanding with their slaves; but in the event of misfortune or bankruptcy in the master or mistress whose slaves had been working under such an arrangement made with them, that the master or mistress might be permitted to prove, on his or her oath, in a court of justice, that such an agreement existed between him or her, and their slaves; and that they (the slaves) had been working under said agreement, for such or such a length of time; that such a sum of money had been gained by them towards their freedom, etc., etc. By which means the slaves, if seized for debt, could only be sold for a certain time, of sufficient duration, after a legal estimation, for the purpose of paying and liquidating the balance due from them (the slaves) on themselves; well understood that such enactments should be made by the different Legislatures, under the express condition that the slaves were not to remain in the United States, but to remove, or to be removed, to Liberia, in Africa, so soon as the time of service for which they were sold should have expired. If, on the other hand, the master or mistress of slaves, who had of their own free will entered into such an agreement with their slaves, should die previous to the slaves having acquired the right to emigrate to Liberia, under the agreement they had made to labor for their freedom, the slaves should be protected by law, and permitted to prove in a court of justice, by one or more disinterested white witnesses, who had heard it from the mouth of the master or mistress of the slaves, the amount they had already gained under the agreement; and they should then be sold as servants for time, to pay the balance due from them, the said slaves, and then forced to emigrate to Liberia.

## SUSISTENCE AND CARE OF THE SLAVES.

I will now say a few words relative to my general mode of treating these people. They were lodged in warm and comfortable houses; fed with good salt provisions and corn bread, with a plenty of garden vegetables cooked with pork; clothed with strong, durable clothing, according to the season. A ration of molasses and one of salt was allowed them weekly, and a little coffee and common tea every six months. Christmas and New-Year's presents served to supply their little wants, and enable them to leave nearly every thing arising from their own labor untouched in my hands. They kept hogs and fowls of their own, and cultivated what ground they needed in corn and vegetables. In sickness, I had as good care taken of them as of myself, with good nurses to attend them.

## MODE OF PUNISHING OFFENCES.

When they committed, or were charged with offences, I did not order an arbitrary punishment, but had them tried by their peers. I would summon a jury of five or six of the principal men; say to them, Such a man or such a woman is charged with such or such an offence. The witnesses, I am told, are such and such persons. Summon them, hold your court, have him tried, and report to me your judgment, and the punishment to be inflicted. It was done all in due form. The court-room was the church; the trial took place, and the person acquitted or condemned. The punishment awarded, if condemned and found guilty, was reported to me, and I generally found it necessary to modify it, in reference to leniency. If twenty lashes were awarded, I would say to the judges, who were the executors of the sentence, Give ten lashes and a moral lecture to the culprit, for the offence. It was done; the criminal acknowledged the justice of the punishment, promised better things for the future, and forgot not to be grateful to the master, who had reduced the degree of punishment, and reinstated him in place and favor.

## NO WHITE OVERSEER NEEDED.

For upwards of twenty years I have had no white man over them as an overseer; one of themselves was their manager or commander, who conducted, directed, and managed the others; nor would I myself have the time in six months to see in person what they were doing, though the commander would report

to me nightly what he had done through the day, and receive my instructions for the day following. They were, besides, my men of business, enjoyed my confidence, were my clerks, transacted all my affairs, made purchases of materials, collected my rents, leased my houses, took care of my property and effects of every kind, and that with an honesty and fidelity which was proof against every temptation.

As I promised to state in the sequel some circumstances that would go to show the spirit that animated and filled their souls, in executing and carrying out the agreement they had entered into with their master, and in what way the extra labor I have spoken of was performed by them, I have now to observe that I have been looked on generally by the French planters on the side of the river opposite to New-Orleans (where I reside), as, if not a very cruel, at least a very severe master, one who works his people late and early; for the whip was seldom or never heard on my plantation—never, indeed, except to uphold and support good order and morality.

MR. M'DONOGH'S PEOPLE VOLUNTARILY LABORED SO HARD THAT  
HE WAS ESTEEMED A CRUEL MASTER.

Some years since, a gentleman from one of the Eastern States, a friend of mine, met me in a street of New-Orleans, on a Monday, and on stopping me, began to smile, saying that he had passed the day previous, the Sabbath, in the country, a few leagues above my residence, on the right bank of the Mississippi, at the house of a rich sugar-planter, who had given a party in honor of his arrival, and there had met at dinner some twenty or thirty French gentlemen—principally sugar-planters of that side of the river—and their ladies; that at dinner the conversation turned on planting, crops, and slavery, etc., etc., and he was asked what was generally thought by the inhabitants of the Eastern and Northern States, of the inhabitants of the South of the Union, the slaveholders. The gentleman replied, among other observations, that the French planters of Louisiana were looked upon generally by the Americans of the North as very severe, and even cruel masters in the treatment of their slaves—much more so even than the planters of Louisiana of English ancestry. This brought from the gentlemen at table an assertion that some of the most severe masters of the State were to be found among the Anglo-Americans—a term by which all Americans and strangers generally are called by the natives



of Louisiana of French descent — and “as an instance, they cited you, mentioning your name as one who obliged his people to work until midnight, and one and two o’clock in the morning; and for the truth of the assertion, they appealed to one another, when it was confirmed by them generally, both ladies and gentlemen, that they had known your black people often and often to have been at work (as they had seen them with their own eyes) until that late hour of the night and morning, adding that it was known to be a common thing with them to work late and early.” The gentleman observed to the company, as he informed me, that the circumstances surprised and astonished him much; knowing me, as he did, he had not supposed me capable of treating my people with such severity, etc., etc. They again assured him of the fact, and appealed to every inhabitant of the country between that and my residence, for its truth. “Now,” says my friend, the gentleman in question, to me, “I merely mention these things to you. I do not inquire as to the truth of it; because I am convinced there is some mistake about it, something I do not understand.” To this I observed, smiling, “Not so fast, my friend. All that those ladies and gentlemen asserted, is true; and they have seen, as they informed you, with their own eyes, my people at work, often and often, at the hours they mentioned to you. But did they tell you, at the same time, that they never saw them at work but they were as merry as crickets, singing and joyful, making the whole neighborhood vocal with their happiness? because, had they told you that, which would have been nothing but the truth, it would no doubt have convinced you that there was no compulsion in their laboring. The only part of the assertion of those ladies and gentlemen which was incorrect, was that wherein they observed that I obliged my slaves to work till midnight, and one and two o’clock in the morning. They are often working, I confess, until these hours; but I do not force them to work; it is of their own free will and accord.” “Then,” observed the gentleman, “you must pay them, I presume.” “I do not say,” said I to him, “what I do, further than that there is no compulsion in their laboring; but I promise that you shall know the story one day, if I am spared” (which he will, as I shall send him a copy of this). We then separated; but I found the gentleman, I confess, very incredulous, notwithstanding he knew something of my character, as to

slaves working of their own accord, without compulsion from their master.

AN ANECDOTE ILLUSTRATIVE OF THEIR CHEERFUL, VOLUNTARY INDUSTRY.

The story is this: My residence is on the opposite side of the Mississippi, immediately in front of the centre of the city of New-Orleans. The steam ferry which runs from one side of the river to the other, lands a short distance below my house. The French ladies and gentlemen residing above my house, on the right bank of the river, being very fond of balls and theatres, were, in consequence, in the constant habit of passing and repassing my house, to and from the city of New-Orleans, in their carriages, at all hours of the night and morning. Immediately below, and adjoining my residence, I had extensive establishments for the making of brick, engaged in working in which, those ladies and gentlemen saw with their own eyes, often and often, my people, at the hours they mentioned, which explains why they considered me a severe master. I have to observe that I was in the habit of never retiring to rest at night until seeing my commander, and knowing that the people had come in from their work (for I have labored myself day and night through a long life, and shall continue so to do to its close). And often and often, when the clock would strike 10, and 11, I would say to a servant of the house, not having seen the commander, "Have the people come in from their work?" And he would reply, "No, sir. I see bonfires in the brick yard; they have not yet finished their work." I would then say to him, "Go out, and ask the commander what keeps him out so late." When he would return to me, saying, "Sir, the commander says there is some thirty or forty thousand bricks out; the weather looks like rain, and he must get them in and save them, or they will be lost." Satisfied with this statement, I have waited until midnight, and sent out again; the same answer returned; again, at 1 o'clock in the morning, the same answer—they singing the whole time, that they might be heard over the neighborhood. At 2 o'clock I have sent out to him with positive orders to break off work, and bring his people in, even if the bricks should be lost—that I would not permit them to work any longer—when in would come the commander (and likely not at all pleased), saying, "Sir, if you had let us gone on an hour or two longer, we should have saved all our brick, which I fear we may lose."

When I have had to console him by telling him, "You cannot work all night; it is very late now; the people must have rest." This will serve to show how the spirit worked within them. And after retiring to bed and rest, I have known them hundreds of times, on an appearance of rain, to arise and go out to work, at all hours of the night and morning.

MR. PARKER TRIES TO BUY ONE OF HIS SLAVES.

I will now give another instance (I could relate hundreds) going to show the effect of that hope, that charm of man's existence, "Liberty," on the life and actions of those people. Some years since, some twenty or thirty of those people were engaged in erecting some extensive brick warehouses on Julia street, in New-Orleans (for they were excellent mechanics of various trades, and were in the habit of making brick, purchasing shells and burning lime, sawing timber, and then taking the materials, when made, and building them up into fine houses, on both sides of the river, for their master), near to the residence of Edward E. Parker, Esq., one of our most wealthy and respectable citizens, a gentleman who was in the habit of building very extensively himself in the city. Meeting Mr. Parker, on a certain day, in a street of New-Orleans, I was accosted and asked whether I would sell him a certain black man named Jim, or James. Having several men by that name, I inquired which James, when he observed, The one who was at the head of the bricklayers who were erecting those warehouses on Julia street, near to his (Mr. Parker's) residence. I replied to him no; that I was not in the habit of selling people; that I purchased occasionally, but never sold. Mr. Parker then observed, that he wished I would depart in the present instance from my general rule, and agree to sell him that man; that he was very desirous of possessing him; that as he was erecting several buildings, the man would suit him; and that he would give a good price for him. I again said to him that the man was not for sale, and was about to leave him, when he observed: "Could you not be tempted, sir, to sell him? I will give you \$2500 for him, in cash." I told Mr. Parker it did not tempt me, and we separated. A week or two thereafter, I met Mr. Parker again, and was again accosted on the same subject, with, "Do, Mr. McDonogh, sell me that man; I will give you \$3000 for him." Again I made him the same answer, that he was not for sale. Again and again we met in the streets, and each time the same

request, by raising the offer of price at each interview, until at last Mr. Parker informed me that he would pay me \$5000 in cash for him. Feeling at length a little vexed at those repeated demands, I said to Mr. Parker, "Though you are a very rich man, sir, your whole fortune could not purchase that man—not that he is worth it, or worth more than any other man, or any of the others, but because he is not to be sold." Mr. Parker, finding, at length, from the refusal of such a large sum of money for him, that there was no hope of obtaining him, observed to me, "Well, then, Mr. McDonogh, seeing now that you will not sell him at any price, tell me, what kind of people are those of yours?" To which I replied, "How so, Mr. Parker? I suppose they are like other men—flesh and blood, like you and myself." When he replied, "Why, sir, I have never seen such people. Building, as they are, next door to my residence, I see, and have my eye on them from morning till night. You are never there; for I have never met you, or seen you once at the building. Tell me, sir," said he, "where do those people of yours live? Do they cross the river morning and night?" I informed him that they lived on the opposite side of the river, where I lived myself, and crossed it to their work, when working in New-Orleans, night and morning, except when stormy (which happened very seldom), when I did not permit them to cross it, to endanger their lives; at such time, they remained at home or in the city. "Why, sir," said he, "I am an early riser, getting up before day; and do you think that I am not awake, every morning of my life, by the noise of their trowels at work, and their singing and noise, before day? and do you suppose, sir, that they stop or leave off work at sunset? No, sir; but they work as long as they can see to lay brick, and then carry up brick and mortar, for an hour or two afterwards, to be ahead of their work the next morning. And again, sir, do you think they walk at their work? No sir; they run all day. You see, sir," said he, "those immensely long ladders, five stories in height; do you suppose they walk up them? No, sir; they run up and down them like monkeys, the whole day long. I never saw such people as those, sir; I do not know what to make of them. Was there a white man over them, with a whip in his hand, all day, why, then I should see and understand the cause of their running and incessant labor. But I cannot comprehend it, sir; there is something in it, sir; there



is something in it. Great man, sir, that Jim—great man, sir—should like to own him, sir—should like to own him.” After having laughed very heartily at the observations of Mr. Parker (for it was all truth, every word of it), I informed him that there was a secret about it, which I would disclose to him some day ; and we separated.

Now, Mr. Parker imputed the conduct of these people (for I have given the very words and expressions he used ; and he is alive, hearty and well, in New-Orleans, and can be spoken to by any one interested in the subject) to the head man who conducted them, and in consequence, impressed with that belief, offered me five thousand dollars for him ; but Mr. Parker knew not the stimulus that acted on the heart of each and every one of them ; that it was the whole body of them that moved together as one mind—not one alone, the head man, as he supposed.

In closing this statement, I will say a few words to show what the attachment of people similarly situated, slaves, will be to a master who treats them justly. The ship on which they sailed for Africa lay opposite my house, in the Mississippi, at the bank of the river. I had taken my leave of them on their going on board the ship, on Friday evening, the day previous to her sailing, in my house. The scene which then took place I will not attempt to describe ; it can never be erased from my memory. Though standing in need, on the occasion, of consolation myself, in bidding a last farewell on earth to those who had so many claims on my affection, and who had been round and about me for such a long series of years, I had to administer it to them, who stood in the greater need of it. To tell them that the separation was but for a brief period of time ; that we should meet again, I trusted, in a better and happier state ; to charge them to gird up their loins, and play the man valiantly in their determination to enter their own Canaan ; and to remember that there was still another and final separation from all things earthly which they had to sustain and encounter, to meet and be prepared for which they must persevere in well-doing to the end ; that their lamps must be kept well trimmed, and their lights burning.

JUNE 11, 1842, THEY EMBARK FOR AFRICA.

On Saturday morning, the Rev. Mr. McLain, the agent of the American Colonization Society, who took a deep interest in all

that concerned this people, crossed the river to despatch the ship, and see them take their departure, which took place about 8 o'clock in the morning of that day, the 11th of June. After seeing them off (the ship was towed by a steamer), Mr. McLain came into my house, as I was expecting him to breakfast; and on seeing him much affected in his manner—a tear standing in his eye—I inquired if any thing had taken place to give him pain, to which he replied, “Oh! sir, it was an affecting sight to see them depart. They were all on the deck of the ship; and your servants who have not gone were on the shore bidding them farewell, when, from every tongue on board the ship, I heard the charge to those on shore, ‘Fanny, take care of our master! James, take care of our master! take care of our master! As you love us, and hope to meet us in heaven, take care of our beloved master!’ Which ejaculations,” said he, “continued till they were out of hearing.” This would appear to reverse the general course of things. It is the master or mistress who is heard, when about to make a voyage, recommending their servants to the care of some confidential person; but here were the servants recommending their master to the care of other servants.

I have now, gentlemen Editors, fulfilled my promise, and related the experience I have had in the management of slaves. Should it induce but one planter in the State to try the mode I pursued so much to my own satisfaction and pecuniary advantage, and meet with the same success which has attended my attempt, I shall consider the time it has cost in giving the relation well spent, and myself fully repaid.

With great respect, I am, gentlemen,

Your friend and obedient servant,

JOHN McDONOUGH.

*McDonogh, opposite New-Orleans, July 10th, 1842.*











DOBBS BROS.  
LIBRARY BINDING

ST. AUGUSTINE  
FLA.



32084



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 011 899 440 1

